

Meeting Agenda

December 5th 2017; 6:30 PM

Philosophy Hall, Room 301

<http://gsac.columbia.edu/>

- I. **Sign-in**
- II. **Approval of November 2017 Minutes** (President) → *approved*
- III. **Presentation by the Title IX Coordinator (*Margie Fisher*: mdf2166@columbia.edu)**
 - A. **Background**: Involved with sexual harassment and assault cases
 1. Been here for a little over a year; previously, consultant to colleges around US related to sexual assault and sexual harassment. Colleges had been asked by federal government to take deeper look following Sandusky scandal at Penn State.
 2. Previously, NYC sex crime investigator in Bronx. Also chief of special victims unit in Queens and professor of law at St. John's University. Also, mother of three - personal insight/background into these issues.
 - B. **Title IX Background**: Prevents gender-based discrimination. Back in '70s when passed, it was because of sports teams. Focus was on equity and pay; particularly see its effects last Olympics where more US women than men got gold medals
 - C. **Shift in application**:
 1. Under Obama, themes of discrimination shifted to mean that any deprivation of education based upon sex was considered to be discrimination. Letter went around saying that if there was such a condition, schools had to address it. Otherwise, federal funding could get taken away. Schools like Columbia get \$1 billion from federal funding each year.
 2. When she started, 55 schools were under investigation for failing to comply with Title IX. Obama's administration made a list and published them.
 3. Currently, 380 schools under investigation, but zero have lost funding. Reason why is because it is too much to lose, and schools willing to work with federal government to do whatever they are told to do. Also, list is no longer public.
 4. Now, Title IX prohibits certain behaviors to make sure that schools have a harassment free environment. Schools must investigate or determine what happened upon being made aware of harassment and must take reasonable steps to resolve hostile environment.
 - D. **Government program**: Not alone: = (government website: <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/protecting-students-sexual-assault>). Lot of publicity on campuses across country (Video: "Not Alone" on YouTube; *sound was not working, so we skipped*). Different perspective under Betsy Devos with proposed changes that some groups are concerned about (Columbia has currently not changed anything).
 1. At present, the requirement is that there must be enough evidence to suggest it's at least slightly more likely than not. Thus far, no school is being called to change, and no known examples of schools changing policies.
 2. 1 in 4 women said that they had been assaulted (raped, groped, etc...). 1 in 16 men said they had same experience, with and 3 of 4 LGBTQ had been assaulted,

with 9% saying they'd been assaulted with penetration. Important to keep these statistics in mind as TAs.

3. Riskiest time = period when walk onto campus and leave for Thanksgiving break
- E. Sexual Harassment: Also protected by Title IX (examples: asking about sexual identity or preferences or always telling sexually explicit jokes or because assailant is in class) and must be investigated. Many different things fall under sexual harassment, including words or actions that have the effect of interfering with a person's academic life. Could happen on campus or internship (even if because of 3rd party). Even if it's off campus, still covered because it can create a hostile environment at school.
1. It is not what the perpetrator was thinking, it was the impact upon the victim.
 2. Common misconception that sexual harassment or assault could not happen at a particular institute or within a particular department. Across all fields and industries, all ages. It affects all of us.
- F. Two kinds of sexual harassment:
1. *quid pro quo* - suggestion that will only get job if "do what's expected of you". Particularly exists in employment setting but also in academic. Would have to find that the victim's job/performance would be connected with relationship.
 2. *hostile work/education environment* - interactions of a sexual nature that affects daily life in academic environment or at work. In order to be deemed "hostile," a reasonable person would have to find that the behavior was severe and pervasive and that it would cause a reasonable person to feel harassed (regardless of intention).
 3. *repercussion* - repercussion due to quid pro quo arrangement or because of reporting upon hostile work/education environment particularly bad.
- G. What Counts/Does not Count:
1. *Power imbalance*: Does not have to be person of other gender or professor/person in higher power setting. Victim does not have to be person harassed. Argument that harassment is OK because pay was not cut, etc... = not acceptable defense.
 2. *Jokes and touching*: a single sexually tinged joke might not qualify whereas habitual joking may (depends upon the effect), whereas touching a body part only a single time could be enough, especially if it keeps you from wanting to go back to work.
 3. *Hugging*: Best to ask first, especially as many survivors of assault cannot stand to be hugged.
 4. *Harvey Weinstein defense*: i.e., "sexual harassment OK because perpetrator came of age during a different time." That doesn't matter, as perpetrator's thought process does not matter.
- H. Takeaway for students and grad students (including at workplace):
1. Don't say anything you wouldn't want your spouse to see in a lawsuit someday
 2. Don't behave towards someone in a way you wouldn't want a relative to be treated
 3. Do not hold business meetings in a hotel room
 4. Don't email anything you wouldn't want to see in the NY Post
 5. Don't consider taxis or other countries to be islands of immunity.

- I. Consensual relationship policy: cannot have romantic relationship with any student you have any degree of supervisory or mentoring relationship with (TAing, writing letter of recommendation, etc...).
 - 1. *If in such a relationship relationship*: tell dean/head of unit that this is happening, and they will move you out of chain of command for this person. Can be problematic if fail to disclose.
 - 2. *Additional issues*: Can be problematic if you've come to study with a particular person.
 - 3. *Why have this sort of policy*: There is an inherent imbalance of power, and if you're relying on someone for job/grade/paycheck, then it means that you are in a difficult position if you're in a relationship and want to leave.
- J. Reporting: As TAs, we are all "responsible employees," meaning that if a student describes an act of discrimination (violence, stalking, harassment), **we are required to contact office of gender based misconduct** (<https://sexualrespect.columbia.edu/university-policy>).
 - 1. *If Students asks for confidentiality*: Because we are "responsible employees", we have no option for discretion and still have to report. However, there are other confidential resources student could make use of (<https://sexualrespect.columbia.edu/get-help-support#key>).
 - 2. *Student choice*: Even if the assault/harassment is reported against the student's wishes, the student still has choice of whether or not to comply with investigation. They still have power over their involvement with case.
 - 3. *If student approaches to confide*: Don't tell student that you have to report before they say anything - let them know that you're there to help, but you may have to share it with someone to make sure campus is safe and student has help. If they don't want to share, then they can go to a confidential source.
 - 4. *Unclear cases*: If you hear of a situation where friend/colleague (not your student) is being harassed, you are not required to report, but can encourage them to file report. You should probably also file if, for example, a year after the fact a student comes to you to say they really liked you in past class.
- K. Q&A:
 - 1. Q: If a professor gropes you on a subway, does it count? A: Yes, for the same reason you should report if someone is being assaulted by spouse or even at a conference in another country. It is still covered by this policy because it affects performance and environment on campus.
 - 2. Q: If you report incidents to PI and they say they cannot report b/c that person is on their tenure committee, then what do you do? A: If you are in position of responsible employee, then you HAVE to report. The behavior has to stop or else it could affect educational environment. Sometimes students ask for waiting periods and just to be taken out of the environment. Lots of options for ways to work with victims to make them more comfortable.
 - 3. Q: What does the investigation entail? A: Depends upon situation and what victim wants. Victim may just want a mediation to let perpetrator know of what the situation is. But if it's been going on for a long time and student asks for investigation, office will do one. Investigation will consist of four investigators; Two will interview student/person making report to ask what

happened, if there are witnesses, if there are photographs, etc... They will then go to perpetrator and ask for their perspective and allow them to say what they want to say. Investigators then generate report, which goes to three professional conduct people on panel. They decide what judgement to carry out. After that, the school dean decides what to do. Then, there is an appeal option.

4. Q: What can you do about professors who assault or harass advisees, especially when we are so reliant on them? A: There's a range of sanctions that can be imposed. How do we protect someone who is worried about their reputation? We may do a lot of things like changing who they are working with, etc... May ensure that recommendation may get written by someone else.

5. Q: How did TAs and faculty come to be made mandatory reporters? A: It's a directive under Title IX. Government said that anyone that is in a position to make a behavior stop is a mandatory reporter. Moreover, if a student perceives you as being someone who could help them, then you are a mandatory reporter. Many, many schools have decided that TAs and faculty should be reporters, although not all. Personally, having been in business for 30 years, she feels that if a person really wanted a complaint to stay quiet, they would not go to a professor or a TA. They would not go to a dean, they'd go to someone they have a connection to.

L. *Other issues:*

1. Dating violence is a big problem, and many students think it's not a real thing. If a student comes to talk to you about them being beaten, it's good for them to have someone they can talk to. We have no discretion and must report, but emphasize that student still has control.

2. *Email:* mdf2166@columbia.edu

IV. **Announcements** (President)

A. Spring semester meetings:

1. *Dates:* January 23, February 20, March 20, April 24 (no May meeting)

2. *Department Representatives:* If you cannot make Tuesday night meetings in spring semester, please find new department representative and register.

B. Update on plenary meeting location: 301 Philosophy for Spring semester

C. Opportunity at CBS (Columbia Business School): IE@Columbia, apply by 12/11/17 [here](#)

1. Consulting opportunity through Business School; anyone in university can get involved

2. 3 month opportunity to learn about how to make business, etc... Coached by Business School faculty.

D. Proposed US tax reforms - Updates

1. Senate and House currently working on reconciling budgets.

2. While not an official statement, Dean Alonso said in meeting with GSAC steering committee that Columbia is committed to its current students and that we should not fret.

E. Update on GSAC budget

1. Lots of travel grant applications, so moving some more money

2. Added \$4,000, up to \$20,000 now (lower expected carryover).
- F. Updates from ad hoc committee for reorganization of graduate student representation: proposal & timeline (Chair of Ad Hoc Committee)
 1. *Rough proposal* (more details will be next month)
 - a) *Formal proposal* = January
 - b) *Vote on whether to divide* = February
 - c) *GSAC (or GSAC replacement) elections* = March; time for transition for new officers.
 2. *Rough Outline for Suggested Division:*
 - a) Take GSAC as it is now and overhaul constitution. Will propose a new name, a total constitutional change, and that new student government would only be for GSAS MA and PhD students.
 - b) With the PhD governing board (technically not part of GSAC), that would be chaired by Dean Alonso. We would not have a lot of say in the board's construction b/c not part of GSAC, but a lot of the people on the ad hoc committee would be part of the new PhD governing board. Will talk to groups and organizations and give recommendations. That group will be made up of 10-12 people. Based into 11-14 groups based upon student governments.
 - c) Need name ideas for both groups - tell Frank. Do not think that GSAC name should continue because of potential for confusion.
 3. *Work for Next month:*
 - a) propose official changes
 - b) outline how changes will affect both students and clubs involved (for example, some clubs will stay under GSAC but some would have to move to other organizations; will contact clubs after goes into effect)
 - c) propose constitutional overhaul and bylaws
 - d) contact other programs with PhD students; propose working constitution for PhD governing board; throughout, stay in communication with Dean Alonso to keep him involved (although the decision to split or not is entirely up to us)

V. **Committee updates**

- A. Alumni & Career Development (no set dates for events yet)
 1. Spring: International Student Seminars
 2. Spring: Alumni Ted Style Talks
 3. Spring: Yearly Alumni/Student Yearly Event w/Social Committee
- B. Budget & Finance
 1. *Travel Grants* - Application Statistics: Unprecedented number of applications for travel grants. Trying to better fund large number of applications by shifting funds within budget. Approved all those whose departments are in good standing.
 2. *Department Funding* - Dean Alonso is trying to push for departmental funding increases (if your department does not currently give enough money for conferences, tell them Dean Alonso wants them to).
- C. Culture
 1. Farinelli and the King, starring Mark Rylance (Feb. 22)

D. Quality of Life

1. *GSAS/GSAC resource guide for students*
 - a) Group is going through all guidelines, annotating when not clear
 - b) Done by mid December with first round of annotations; next semester, work on refining
2. *Focus group luncheons*
 - a) Specifically for certain groups that are affected by policies (parents, students with disabilities, international students) to see what their insights and suggestions/feedback would be.
 - b) Parents focus group is coming up soon, please reach out to parents in your departments to talk to Milica.
 - c) Luncheons will be announced in newsletter.

E. Social

1. *Holiday Party @ The Attic, 12/15, 7PM → SOLD OUT (updates for students who have tickets to sell will be announced on Facebook)*
2. *Hunter Mountain - ski/snowboard trip 2/10/2018 ~ max cost with bus would be \$110 (7 am-5 pm)*
3. *Planned events:*
 - a) January - welcome back party
 - b) Planning to buy Book of Mormon and Spongebob Musical tickets; already have tickets to Dear Evan Hansen.
 - c) More community events
 - d) April - kickball tournament with TC.
4. *Past events:*
 - a) raised \$350 for Puerto Rico fundraiser.

VI. **External Representatives Updates**

- A. Health (Morningside, CUMC) → *Question to take to Health: AETNA and CVS merger, how will this impact us? Can we still go to any pharmacy?*
- B. Libraries → *No updates. Temperatures OK? If have any feedback, tell library representatives.*
- C. Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC)/Union:
 1. *Petition for real recourse against sexual harassment :*
 - a) If we had a signed contract, then we would have access to neutral arbitrator instead of process completely controlled by Columbia.
 - b) Petition: realrecourse.org
 - c) Friday = present sexual harassment petition to Bollinger (*comment: university is currently being sued by a student who says that university ignored her complaints; so, please do sign petition*)
 2. *Campaign against House and Senate Tax Bill*
 - a) Been protesting against tax bill
 - b) Emailed Dean Alonso 3x to ask for feedback as to how to look out for Columbia students
 - c) Cornell gets around this by defining tuition as scholarship; could we do that too?
 3. *Anniversary of vote on unionization (Saturday, December 9th)*
 - a) There is a small protest planned, but location is TBD.

D. Office of University Life Events Council:

1. *New Group*

- a) Spans all schools, including undergrads (so, events won't have alcohol)
- b) Please pass along any ideas for large group activities that don't involve alcohol (to Sarah J.)

2. *Upcoming Events:*

- a) Low Lounge - 12/12/17, 12-5PM
 - (1) Study/relax space in Low Lounge with free goods on the hour → relaxing time.
 - (2) Five hours to just enjoy music and veg out. Free.
- b) In spring, idea participate with Pride Parade and have a Columbia float for the first time

3. *Planning:*

- a) meeting next week
- b) Hoping to develop 3 great activities that will become annual events
- c) We are the only school that only has 1 representative right now for University Life Events Council

E. Disabilities:

1. *Ongoing search for dedicated testing space for those who need more time*

2. *Panel Discussion - Navigating the City (in Spring)*

- a) Usually a fall panel addressing disability issues, moved to spring,
- b) Will probably focus on mobility on campus and in city.

3. *SDS QoL survey completed*

- a) Sent survey to General Studies; hope to expand to more departments/schools in the future

4. *Request to TAS:*

- a) How do TAS with disabilities address difficulties and ask for accommodation
- b) Also, how currently handling students with disabilities?
- c) What resources or support do you have or would you like to have?
- d) Please pass along personal or anecdotal insights.

F. ISSO → No updates

- 1. should have more updates in January.
- 2. International students: Make sure you have your signatures before leaving the country for break.

VII. **Senators' Updates** → No updates

VIII. **New Business** (Open Forum)

IX. **Committee meetings & Adjournment** (President)

- A. Final note: We will continue to provide updates to the tax bill in the newsletter; may know by end of month